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THEOSOPHY

A MAGAZINE DEVOTED TO

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT
THE BROTHERHOOD OF HUMANITY
THE STUDY OF OCCULT SCIENCE AND PHILOSOPHY
AND ARYAN LITERATURE

Vol. XXXIII, 1944-1945

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THE THEOSOPHY COMPANY, of Los Angeles, California, U. S. A., which is an incorporated association, legally empowered to receive such donations and bequests in furtherance of its objects. These objects are:

(*a*) To form the nucleus of a universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or color;

(*b*) The study of ancient and modern religions, philosophies and sciences, and the demonstration of the importance of such study; and

(*c*) The investigation of the unexplained laws of nature and the psychical powers latent in man.

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THE THEOSOPHY COMPANY
245 West 33rd Street
Los Angeles (7), California, U. S. A.

THE UNITED LODGE OF THEOSOPHISTS

DECLARATION

The policy of this Lodge is independent devotion to the cause of Theosophy, without professing attachment to any Theosophical organization. It is loyal to the great Founders of the Theosophical Movement, but does not concern itself with dissensions or differences of individual opinion.

The work it has on hand and the end it keeps in view are too absorbing and too lofty to leave it the time or inclination to take part in side issues. That work and that end is the dissemination of the Fundamental Principles of the philosophy of Theosophy, and the exemplification in practice of those principles, through a truer realization of the SELF; a profounder conviction of Universal Brotherhood.

It holds that the unassailable basis for union among Theosophists, wherever and however situated, is "similarity of aim, purpose and teaching," and therefore has neither Constitution, By-Laws nor Officers, the sole bond between its Associates being that basis. And it aims to disseminate this idea among Theosophists in the furtherance of Unity.

It regards as Theosophists all who are engaged in the true service of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, condition or organization, and

It welcomes to its association all those who are in accord with its declared purposes and who desire to fit themselves, by study and otherwise, to be the better able to help and teach others.

"The true Theosophist belongs to no cult or sect; yet belongs to each and all."

Being in sympathy with the purposes of this Lodge, as set forth in its "Declaration," I hereby record my desire to be enrolled as an Associate, it being understood that such association calls for no obligation on my part, other than that which I, myself, determine.

The foregoing is the Form signed by Associates of the United Lodge of Theosophists. Inquiries are invited from all persons to whom this Movement may appeal. Cards for signatures will be sent upon request, and every possible assistance furnished Associates in their studies and in efforts to form local Lodges. There are no fees of any kind, and no formalities to be complied with. Write to:

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Vol. XXXIII—No. 1 **November, 1944**

ALL original thinkers and investigators of the hidden side of nature whether materialists—those who find in matter "the promise and potency of all terrestrial life," or spiritualists—that is, those who discover in spirit the source of all energy and of matter as well, were and are, properly Theosophists. For to be one, one need but worship the spirit of living nature, and try to identify oneself with it. Once that a student abandons the old and trodden highway of routine, and enters upon the solitary path of independent thought—Godward—he is a Theosophist; an original thinker, a seeker after the eternal truth, with "an inspiration of his own" to solve the universal problems. With every man that is earnestly searching in his own way after knowledge of the Divine Principle, of man's relations to it, and nature's manifestations of it, Theosophy is allied.

—H.P.B.

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A U M

The sense of the divine utterances is manifold and infinite, even as in one and the same feather of the peacock we behold a marvellous and beautiful variety of countless colours. —JOHN SCOTUS

THEOSOPHY

Vol. XXXIII November, 1944 No. 1

THEOSOPHICAL OBJECTIVES—PAST AND PRESENT

THE establishment, in 1875, of the original Theosophical Society upon the working platform of "The Three Objects" brought before the public an entirely new approach to the fields of religion and philosophy. Religions, as always in the Occident since the advent of Christianity, were plentiful. But they were partisan religions, and the majority of their self-satisfied followers was far more concerned with retaining their emotional insulation than with manifesting moral responsibility to the social order. The T. S. was a living rejection of the partisan attitude toward moral precepts. True religion was defined as any natural means for expressing and encouraging man's intuitive perception of that which is common to the whole of humanity—regardless of "race, creed, sex, condition or organization."

In the same unequivocal manner that the T. S. dissociated itself from partisan politics, H. P. Blavatsky led it towards a dissociation from rabid expressions of disagreement upon matters of supreme religious authority. By this single step—by adopting an attitude of unprejudiced study to discover the essence common to all religions—the T. S. made plain to open minds that its object was not to distribute a new collection of dogmas by which to set off members of one select group from their fellows. The T. S. proposed, instead, to establish the common ground for universal brotherhood. Religion thus received a new orientation—the study and application of those philosophical principles which are capable of bringing each man closer to his fellow, and the Society dedicated itself to the cause of a much-needed moral and intellectual revolution.

To those who have endeavored to comprehend H. P. Blavatsky's reasons for the inception of a "popular" magazine such as *Lucifer*, it should become clear that she neither exemplified nor encouraged the "religious temperament." Her indictments of organized religion were never made on the ground of her exclusive possession of a superior authority—they were primarily indictments of unwarranted "spiritual" authority and of the fruits of the church as the supreme citadel of social reaction. It may be permissible to assume that she would have been happy indeed could she have left the entire religious field to those more temperamentally at home in its atmosphere of maudlin self-satisfaction. Never did she wish to separate herself from the struggles of the "common man" by preoccupation with an abstract religious terminology. She entered the arena of religious struggle because its sacrosanct blasphemies against the essential dignity of man were the cornerstone of a civilization moving towards decay in authoritarian materialism.

But Madame Blavatsky was never oblivious to the discrepancy between the society which existed—the pious society of virtuous soup-kitchens supported by the spare pittances of those whose social practices made them necessary—and the society which *might be* if men's minds and souls could be cleared of fear and bigotry. The attention given to Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backwards* in her *Key to Theosophy* evidences her appreciation of the practical "political" visionaries who cried for a new and fairer world. While she made clear the necessary separation of the T. S. from any and all political parties, the T. S. itself became the most practical of "political" organizations—concerned most deeply with the whole of the body politic.

The highest science of government is the art of helping men to live harmoniously and constructively together. Those governments are best, it is truly said, which govern the least—governments both operated and restrained by mutual, educated acceptance of basic principles. The T. S. endeavored to exemplify the highest form of government conceivable in, and practical for, its era. Wrote H. P. Blavatsky in the opening number of *The Theosophist*:

> Born in the United States of America, the Society was constituted on the model of its Mother Land. The latter, omitting the name of God from its constitution lest it should afford a pretext one day to make a state religion, gives absolute equality to all religions in its laws. All support and each is in turn protected by the State. The Society, modelled upon this constitution, may fairly be termed a "Republic of Conscience."

The T. S., in 1875, was concerned with fundamental principles. Principles are basic human truths, the truths able to emerge when men of all creeds and sects meet together to consider the philosophical roots of their common humanity. The first object of the T. S.: "To form a nucleus of a universal brotherhood."

The Society had a program—a plan for the cooperative utilization of heterogeneous individual efforts. (Who had before heard of any organization even remotely connected with the field of religion having any other plan than the extension of hierarchical authority?) This was a social plan. Within the framework of T. S. organization these practical steps were essayed:

(1) To offer an initial program as a working basis for tolerant and searching *study* of religions, philosophies and sciences in the interests of reaching a broad and basic agreement.

(2) To consolidate and deepen the understanding of this working basis by conscientious effort. It was at this point that the writings of H. P. Blavatsky became an educational inspiration, offering a synthesis in the spirit of the Society's avowed basis. The nineteenth century's presentation of Theosophical philosophy was called forth by, and was in keeping with, the needs shared by the working members of the society. As H. P. B.'s synthesis became understood and its significance grasped, an increasing clarity of agreement upon specific matters of philosophy resulted. Her writings aided men to reach the natural conclusions possible "whenever men are allowed to reflect in an unprejudiced manner." The practical testing of Theosophical doctrine became a matter for the concern of each individual, and thus those who were willing to learn came to understand something of the broad scope which the message of Theosophy might have.

(3) To understand the structure and the motivations of the various currently influential movements. These all were a part of the natural racial heritage, from which no teacher would wish to totally separate himself.

(4) To shed light, through individual theosophists, upon the political, economic and social issues of the time in terms of *principle*.

The purpose of H. P. B.'s organizational efforts needs to be understood. What was the significance of her attempts to bring within the area of the Society men of many differing persuasions and prejudices? Certainly, numerical impressiveness was far from the mind of one who sought to help and teach only those "who were ready." The Theosophical Movement, as a march through the

world of those ideas which might make men free, could truly have a beginning only if its workers were able to understand what they were beginning with. The Society was deliberately made a field for the cross-section representation which it received.

Subtly connected with the thread of theosophical thought through the ages there were always available avenues of approach for the individual. The effort of 1875 asked those "who were ready" to do more than simply find their way—difficult though this single task has always been. Theosophists were asked to take upon themselves responsibility for their fellows—to understand them, to become an intelligent part of both the inner and the everyday worlds, and to build bridges between these for the use of other eager wayfarers. The Society was concerned with the presentation of a definite, concise philosophy. But as a body, as a cooperative effort, the members were asked to comprehend the typical expressions of all other minds, and bring to those in unconscious as well as conscious need the philosophical essentials in terms which listeners of all persuasions might understand.

Today, this work remains for theosophists to complete. They must gather up, must tie, many loose ends in the tragic tangle of a movement whose members have not yet proved themselves strong enough to stand on principle. The non-organizational example of U. L. T. has enabled many to achieve something of this process for themselves—to reach a solidity of understanding without benefit of Theosophical clergy, and to attain clarity in respect to the problems of their own lives. But the scattered ends, once re-bound, must have more than a personal function. If the example of those who have represented Theosophy to the world means anything to those who share its benefits, the potential strength of concerted pulling power must be utilized.

The ship of society, the ship of state, is floundering in the confusion of materialism. Its captains frantically haul in many directions to avert disaster, but without a basis for fundamental agreement concerning the ends and means of life the rudderless vessel can at best only continue to drift with the tide. Clarity must come before cooperation, and clarity can only come when confusions are resolved by application of principle. The ship of society, the ship of state, needs to be towed along. Its life is the life of humanity, from which no true theosophist can, or wishes to, separate himself. There are companions to help. The Theosophist needs to discover them for himself, make their work his work, and let them come to make his work more consciously theirs.

FROM "CAVES AND JUNGLES"

V

WE Hindus owe our music only to living nature, and in nowise to inanimate objects. In a higher sense of the word, we are pantheists, and so our music is, so to speak, pantheistic; but, at the same time, it is highly scientific. Coming from the cradle of humanity, the Aryan races, who were the first to attain manhood, listened to the voice of nature, and concluded that melody as well as harmony are both contained in our great common mother. Nature has no false and no artificial notes; and man, the crown of creation, felt desirous of imitating her sounds. In their multiplicity, all these sounds—according to the opinion of some of your Western physicists—make only one tone, which we all can hear, if we know how to listen, in the eternal rustle of the foliage of big forests, in the murmur of water, in the roar of the storming ocean, and even in the distant roll of a great city. This tone is the middle F, the fundamental tone of nature. In our melodies it serves as the starting point, which we embody in the keynote, and around which are grouped all the other sounds. Having noticed that every musical note has its typical representative in the animal kingdom, our ancestors found out that the seven chief tones correspond to the cries of the goat, the peacock, the ox, the parrot, the frog, the tiger, and the elephant. So the octave was discovered and founded. As to its subdivisions and measure, they also found their basis in the complicated sounds of the same animals."

"I am no judge of your ancient music," said the colonel, "nor do I know whether your ancestors did, or did not, work out any musical theories, so I cannot contradict you; but I must own that, listening to the songs of the modern Hindus, I could not give them any credit for musical knowledge." . . .

"If Hindu music belonged to an epoch as little distant from us as the European; and if, besides, it included all the virtues of all the previous musical systems, which the European music assimilates; then no doubt it would have been better understood, and better appreciated than it is. But our music belongs to pre-historic times. In one of the sarcophagi at Thebes, Bruce found a harp with twenty strings, and judging by this instrument, we may safely say that the ancient inhabitants of Egypt were well acquainted with the mysteries

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NOTE.—This is the concluding installment in the series of selections from H. P. Blavatsky's *From Caves and Jungles of Hindostan.* The Takur is here discussing Hindu music.

of harmony. But, except the Egyptians, we were the only people possessing this art, in the remote epochs, when the rest of mankind were still struggling with the elements for bare existence.

"We possess hundreds of Sanskrit MSS about music, which have never been translated, even into modern Indian dialects. Some of them are four thousand and eight thousand years old. Whatever your Orientalists may say to the contrary, we will persist in believing in their antiquity, because we have read and studied them, while the European scientists have never yet set their eyes on them. There are many of these musical treatises, and they have been written at different epochs; but they all, without exception, show that in India music was known and systematized in times when the modern civilized nations of Europe still lived like savages. However true, all this does not give us the right to grow indignant when Europeans say they do not like our music, as long as their ears are not accustomed to it, and their minds cannot understand its spirit. . . . To a certain extent we can explain to you its technical character, and give you a right idea of it as a science. But nobody can create in you, in a moment, what the Aryans used to call *Rakti;* the capacity of the human soul to receive and be moved by the combinations of the various sounds of nature. This capacity is the alpha and omega of our musical system, but you do not possess it, as we do not possess the possibility to fall into raptures over Bellini."

"But why should it be so? What are these mysterious virtues of your music, that can be understood only by yourselves? From a physiological point of view we are duplicates of each other."

"Physiologically, yes. And it would be as true psychologically, if education did not interfere, which, after all is said and done, could not but influence the mental and the moral direction taken by a human being. Sometimes it extinguishes the divine spark; at other times it only increases it, transforming it into a lighthouse which becomes man's lode-star for life."

"No doubt this is so. But the influence it has over the physiology of the ear cannot be so overpowering after all."

"Quite the contrary. Only remember what a strong influence climatic conditions, food and everyday surroundings have on the complexion, vitality, capacity for reproduction, and so on, and you will see that you are mistaken. Apply this same law of gradual modification to the purely psychic element in man, and the results will be the same. Change the education and you will change the capacities of a human being. . . . For instance, you believe in the powers of

gymnastics, you believe that special exercise can almost transform the human body. We go one step higher. The experience of centuries shows that gymnastics exist for the soul as well as for the body. But what the soul's gymnastics are is our secret. What is it that gives to the sailor the sight of an eagle, that endows the acrobat with the skill of a monkey, and the wrestler with muscles of iron? Practice and habit. Then why should not we suppose the same possibilities in the soul of the man as well as in his body? Perhaps on the grounds of modern science—which either dispenses with the soul altogether, or does not acknowledge in it a life distinct from the life of the body. . . ."

"Please do not speak in this way, Takur. You, at least, ought to know that I believe in the soul and in its immortality!"

"We believe in the immortality of spirit, not of soul, following the triple division of body, soul and spirit. However, this has nothing to do with the present discussion. . . . And so you agree to the proposition that every dormant possibility of the soul may be led to perfected strength and activity by practice, and also that if not properly used it may grow numb and even disappear altogether. Nature is so zealous that all her gifts should be used properly, that it is in our power to develop or to kill in our descendants any physical or mental gift. A systematic training or a total disregard will accomplish both in the lifetime of a few generations."

"Perfectly true; but that does not explain to me the secret charm of your melodies. . . ."

"These are details and particulars. Why should I dwell on them when you must see for yourself that my reasoning gives you the clue, which will solve many similar problems? Centuries have accustomed the ear of a Hindu to be receptive only of certain combinations of atmospheric vibrations; whereas the ear of a European is used to perfectly different combinations. Hence the soul of the former will be enraptured where the soul of the latter will be perfectly indifferent. I hope my explanation has been simple and clear, and I might have ended it here were it not that I am anxious to give you something better than the feeling of satisfied curiosity. As yet I have solved only the physiological aspect of the secret, which is as easily admitted as the fact that we Hindus eat by the handful spices which would give you inflammation of the intestines if you happened to swallow a single grain. Our aural nerves, which, at the beginning, were identical with yours, have been changed through different training, and became as distinct from yours as our complexion and our

stomachs. Add to this that the eyes of the Kashmir weavers, men and women, are able to distinguish three hundred shades more than the eye of a European. . . . The force of habit, the law of atavism, if you like. But things of this kind practically solve the apparent difficulty. You have come all the way from America to study the Hindus and their religion; but you will never understand the latter if you do not realize how closely all our sciences are related, not to the modern ignorant Brahmanism, of course, but to the philosophy of our primitive Vedic religion."

"I see. You mean that your music has something to do with the *Vedas?*"

"Exactly. It has a good deal—almost everything—to do with the *Vedas*. All the sounds of nature, and, in consequence, of music, are directly allied to astronomy and mathematics; that is to say, to the planets, the signs of the zodiac, the sun and moon, and to rotation and numbers. Above all, they depend on the *Akasha,* the ether of space, of the existence of which your scientists have not made perfectly sure as yet. This was the teaching of the ancient Chinese and Egyptians, as well as of ancient Aryans. The doctrine of the 'music of the spheres' first saw the light here in India, and not in Greece or Italy, whither it was brought by Pythagoras after he had studied under the Indian Gymnosophists. And most certainly this great philosopher—who revealed to the world the heliocentric system before Copernicus and Galileo—knew better than anyone else how dependent are the least sounds in nature on Akasha and its interrelations.

"One of the four *Vedas,* namely, the *Sama-Veda,* entirely consists of hymns. This is a collection of mantrams sung during the sacrifices to the gods, that is to say, to the elements. Our ancient priests were hardly acquainted with the modern methods of chemistry and physics; but, to make up for it, they knew a good deal which has not as yet been thought of by modern scientists. So it is not to be wondered at that sometimes our priests, so perfectly acquainted with natural sciences as they were, forced the elementary gods, or rather the blind forces of nature, to answer their prayers by various portents. Every sound of these mantrams has its meaning, its importance, and stands exactly where it ought to stand; and, having a *raison d'etre,* it does not fail to produce its effect. Remember Professor Leslie, who says that the science of sound is the most subtle, the most unseizable and the most complicated of all the series

of physical sciences. And if ever this teaching was worked out to perfection it was in the times of the Rishis, our philosophers and saints, who left to us the *Vedas.*"

"Now, I think I begin to understand the origin of all the mythological fables of the Greek antiquity," thoughtfully said the colonel; "the syrinx of Pan, his pipe of seven reeds, the fauns, the satyrs, and the lyre of Orpheus himself. The ancient Greeks knew little about harmony; and the rhythmical declamations of their dramas, which probably never reached the pathos of the simplest of modern recitals, could hardly suggest to them the idea of the magic lyre of Orpheus. I feel strongly inclined to believe what was written by some of our great philologists: Orpheus must be an emigrant from India; his very name, *orphnos,* shows that, even amongst the tawny Greeks, he was remarkably dark. This was the opinion of Lempriere and others."

"Some day this opinion may become a certainty. There is not the slightest doubt that the purest and the highest of all the musical forms of antiquity belongs to India. All our legends ascribe magic powers to music; it is a gift and a science coming straight from the gods. As a rule, we ascribe all our arts to divine revelation, but music stands at the head of everything else. The invention of the *vina,* a kind of lute, belongs to Narada, the son of Brahma. You will probably laugh at me if I tell you that our ancient priests, whose duty it was to sing during the sacrifices, were able to produce phenomena that could not but be considered by the ignorant as signs from supernatural powers; and this, remember, without a shadow of trickery, but simply with the help of their perfect knowledge of nature and certain combinations well known to them. The phenomena produced by the priests and the Raj-Yogis are perfectly natural for the initiate—however miraculous they may seem to the masses."

"But do you really mean that you have no faith whatever in the spirits of the dead?" timidly asked Miss X—, who was always ill at ease in the presence of the Takur.

"With your permission, I have none."

"And . . . and have you no regard for mediums?"

"Still less than for the spirits, my dear lady. I do believe in the existence of many psychic diseases, and amongst their number, in mediumism, for which we have got a queer sounding name from time immemorial. We call it *Bhuta-Dak,* literally a bhuta-hostelry. I sincerely pity the real mediums, and do whatever is in my power

to help them. As to the charlatans, I despise them, and never lose an opportunity of unmasking them."

The witch's den near the "dead city" suddenly flashed into my mind; the fat Brahman, who played the oracle in the head of the Sivatherium, caught and rolling down the hole; the witch suddenly taking to her heels. And with this recollection also occurred to me what I had never thought of before: Narayan had acted under the orders of the Takur—doing his best to expose the witch and her ally.

"The unknown power which possesses the mediums (which the spiritualists believe to be spirits of the dead, while the superstitious see in it the devil, and the sceptics deceit and infamous tricks), true men of science suspect to be a natural force, which has not as yet been discovered. It is, in reality, a terrible power. Those possessed by it are generally weak people, often women and children. Your beloved spiritualists, Miss X—, only help the growth of dreadful psychic diseases, but people who know better seek to save them from this force you know nothing whatever about, and it is no use discussing this matter now. I shall only add one word: the real living spirit of a human being is as free as Brahma; and even more than this for us, for, according to our religion and our philosophy, our spirit is Brahma himself, higher than whom there is only the unknowable, the all-pervading, the omnipotent essence of Parabrahm. The living spirit of man cannot be ordered about like the spirits of the spiritualists, it cannot be made a slave of. . . . However, it is getting so late that we had better go to bed. Let us say good-bye for to-night."

Gulab-Lal-Sing would not talk any more that night, but I have gathered from our previous conversations many a point without which the above conversation would remain obscure.

The Vedantins and the followers of Shankaracharya's philosophy, in talking of themselves, often avoid using the pronoun I, and say, "this body went," "this hand took," and so on, in everything concerning the automatic actions of man. The personal pronouns are only used concerning mental and moral processes, such as, "I thought," "he desired." The body in their eyes is not the man, but only a covering to the real man.

The real interior man possesses many bodies; each of them more subtle and more pure than the preceding; and each of them bears a different name and is independent of the material body. After

death, when the earthly vital principle disintegrates, together with the material body, all these interior bodies join together, and either advances on the way to Moksha, and is called *Deva* (divine), or is left on earth, to wander and to suffer in the invisible world, and, in this case, is called bhuta. But a Deva has no tangible intercourse with the living. Its only link with the earth is its posthumous affection for those it loved in its lifetime, and the power of protecting and influencing them.

Love outlives every earthly feeling, and a Deva can appear to the beloved ones only in their dreams—unless it be as an illusion, which cannot last, because the body of a Deva undergoes a series of gradual changes from the moment it is freed from its earthly bonds; and, with every change, it grows more intangible, losing every time something of its objective nature. It is reborn; it lives and dies in new *Lokas* or spheres, which gradually become purer and more subjective. At last, having got rid of every shadow of earthly thoughts and desires, it becomes *nothing* from a material point of view. It is extinguished like a flame, and, having become one with Parabrahm, it lives the life of spirit, of which neither our material conception nor our language can give any idea. But the eternity of Parabrahm is not the eternity of the soul. The latter, according to a Vedanta expression, is an eternity in eternity. However holy, the life of a soul had its beginning and its end, and consequently, no sins and no good actions can be punished or rewarded in the eternity of Parabrahm. This would be contrary to justice, *disproportionate,* to use an expression of Vedanta philosophy.

Spirit alone lives in eternity, and has neither beginning nor end, neither limits nor central point. The Deva lives in Parabrahm, as a drop lives in the ocean, till the next regeneration of the universe from Pralaya—a periodical chaos, a disappearance of the worlds from the region of objectivity. With every new Maha-yuga (great cycle) the Deva separates from that which is eternal, attracted by existence in objective worlds, like a drop of water first drawn up by the sun, then starting again downwards, passing from one region to another, and returning at last to the dirt of our planet. Then, having dwelt there whilst a small cycle lasted, it proceeds again upwards on the other side of the circle. So it gravitates in the eternity of Parabrahm, passing from one minor eternity to another. Each of these "human," that is to say conceivable, eternities consists of 4,320,000,000 years of objective life and of as many years of subjective life in Parabrahm, altogether 8,640,000,000 years, which are

enough, in the eyes of the Vedantins, to redeem any mortal sin, and also to reap the fruit of any good actions performed in such a short period as human life. The individuality of the soul, teaches the Vedanta, is not lost when plunged into Parabrahm, as is supposed by some of the European Orientalists.

Only the souls of bhutas—when the last spark of repentance and of tendency to improvement are extinguished in them—will evaporate for ever. Then their divine spirit, the undying part of them, separates from the soul and returns to its primitive source; the soul is reduced to its primordial atoms, and the monad plunges into the darkness of eternal unconsciousness. This is the only case of total destruction of personality.

Such is the Vedanta teaching concerning the spiritual man. And this is why no true Hindu believes in the disembodied souls voluntarily returning to earth, except in the case of bhutas. . . .

Seriously speaking, what is there to prevent humanity from acknowledging two active forces within itself; one purely animal, the other purely divine? The phenomena of spiritualism would then transmigrate from the region of materialized "mothers-in-law" and half-witted fortune-telling to the regions of the psycho-physiological sciences. The celebrated "spirits" would probably evaporate, but in their stead the living spirit, which "belongeth not to this world," would become better known and better realized by humanity, because humanity will comprehend the harmony of the whole only after learning how closely the visible world is bound to the world invisible.

* * * * *

The gifts of the true Raj-Yogis are much more interesting, and a great deal more important for the world, than the phenomena of the lay Hatha-Yogis. These gifts are purely psychic: to the knowledge of the Hatha-Yogis the Raj-Yogis add the whole scale of mental phenomena.

STUDIES IN KARMA

Foci of Catastrophe

A VILLAGE in Hungary by the name of Kaplona is known to some as "the world's unluckiest town." As an illustration of how unlucky it is, we quote the following narrative from *The American Weekly,* March 5:

The catastrophes began in 1848, during the Hungarian revolt against Austrian domination. Kaplona's men paid the price for participating in the revolt. They were conscripted into the Hungarian army. Then, to punish all in the town, Austrian troops burned it to the ground.

The ashes were still smoldering when rain began to fall, and the weeping townsfolk cursed the downpour for coming too late. The rainfall continued. Kaplona, deep in a valley, was flooded. Eight drowned.

Since then Kaplona has known no let-up. Three years after the fire and flood the town was in the grip of diphtheria, to which half the population succumbed.

In 1861 wolves, bears and wild boar swarmed into Kaplona. The carefully tilled fields were ruined by the boars. Horses, cows and domesticated hogs fell prey to the wolves and bears. And there was another diphtheria plague in 1864.

Five years later all but 97 houses in Kaplona were leveled by fire. Scores of inhabitants were burned to death. Only 200 were left.

By that time the residents of Kaplona, and most of central Hungary, believed that an evil spirit lurked in the village. Exorcism failed. The town's inhabitants decided to flee. They pooled their entire wealth, 18,000 florins, to purchase land elsewhere, away from the curse. A committee of eight was delegated to negotiate the deal at the county seat.

The committee was preparing to set out when bandits swarmed into the town, slew every committeeman, and made off with the 18,000 florins.

For several years the village enjoyed such respite from the curse that in 1875 they celebrated with a festive ball in the inn. One reveler obtained a keg of gunpowder. There was a tremendous explosion. Seventeen celebrants were killed.

There was another fire in 1881. It spared 63 houses but leveled the only church.

The side of one of the mountains flanking Kaplona tumbled down on the village in 1900, burying the northern half. That left only 33 homes.

> During the First World War 21 men of Kaplona fought at the front. Nine were killed. None came home without a wound. One brought with him as a souvenir, a hand grenade. The grenade exploded, killing the veteran and wounding almost all the welcoming villagers.
>
> In 1938, none of the inhabitants could pay his dog license. So every animal was killed. Scarcely had this been accomplished when an army of foxes devoured all the poultry.
>
> The men of Kaplona are not fighting in this present war. None is young or strong enough. The village's desolation is complete.

No more complete, of course, than that of major portions of the rest of Europe by now. . . .

Religion and science have no better explanations of such visitations than respectively, "the Will of God" and "chance," the former more than a little nauseating to any just mind, the latter impossible in such a case even under the so-called *"laws* of chance" which are, to boot, one hundred percent amoral, and offer, to say the least, no guidance towards either hope or right conduct. The case of Kaplona is merely one illustration of questions such as why Lidice was singled out from other towns for a visitation of homicidal mania, or the question in the back of the mind of a French farmer who, conversing with the victorious American troops, remarked that the greatest thing that America could do for France would be to arrange for the next world war to be fought somewhere else. Why always in France, among a people growing old, and become very tired of war? In like manner, Belgium has been known for generations as "the cockpit of Europe," while its immediate neighbor and blood kin, the Netherlands, was at peace for 130 years preceding the present catastrophe. In any other thought than that of Theosophy, the 130 years and the last four years remain equally inexplicable.

Beyond question there is an individuality in the Karma of villages, cities and nations. As in the case of the individual, a certain line of thought opens the door to a series of trooping events, each of which forces the portals wider for those which follow it.

The dreadful Karma of Europe, which, as Madame Blavatsky wrote in 1888, was bringing on an imminent *"age black with horrors"* no doubt began in the night of time with a seemingly harmless seed. For all we know, a tribal dispute over a pasture, that left a few broken heads and a few rancors strong enough to carry over incarnations, and expand their growth in the fertile soil of this age of scientific barbarism. Of course that seed itself, whatever it may have been, was dropped from an earlier harvest—Atlantis?

These local infections for a given cycle are engendered by the dark brooding of some mind equipped with an unusual power of creative thought toward the left-hand path, or Sorcery, a power usually unsuspected by its possessor as well as by others. Such a generator of lasting astral images sets up a darkening atmosphere of affinity for like thought, will and feeling, into which succeeding generations of the doomed are born.

There is no clearer case history than that of Germany, numbers of whose citizens have in the last four years done in flesh and in fact the horrors falsely attributed to them by deliberate propaganda in the former war. The German mind had become susceptible to these creations, but *who,* in view of the fact that all events have their origin in the mind and imagination, *shares that guilt?*

In 1888, Madame Blavatsky published an article, "Karmic Visions" (reprinted in THEOSOPHY III, 544) in which the fate of Europe was delineated for all who had eyes to see. While H.P.B. did not say so specifically, a comparison of historical events leaves little doubt that the nation pictured was Germany, and its monarch, Frederick III; or that the events depicted represented the real crisis in German history, unnoticed and unperceived at the time. Yet up to 1914, and long afterwards, the international history of Germany was better than that of Britain, France, or Russia. In fact, as the whole presently proscribed breed of professional historians knows, and as the Bolshevist successors of the Czars revealed, it was Russia and not Germany who precipitated the war of 1914. Nevertheless, through all those years of scientific and even social advance, Germany was becoming infiltrated by those doomed to destroy her and a major part of civilization with her. Thus grew a seed in the dark, waiting fertilization by the "justice" of 1919-1924.

It was not the growing militarism of Germany—no worse than that of Russia, or the growing navalism of Great Britain—that was the most sinister sign. *It was the birth of a moral monster like Haeckel,* who became a "scientific" leader of the world outside, as well as inside, Germany and whose influence still pervades scientific thought whenever it turns to questions passing beyond the material. Haeckel's book, *The Riddle of the Universe,* the most subtle, powerful, and sinister testament of nihilism and materialistic despair ever written, is the true "opposite number" of the *Secret Doctrine,* and passed in huge editions to every part of the world, being exceeded only in circulation by the Bible. When one couples the influence of this black book with that of the ferocious racial

and religious hatreds that breathe through the Old Testament, many dark lines of Karma become illuminated.

It is said that for every Buddha there is a Kansa, for every innovation, however noble, its dark shadow. H.P.B. wrote of Ernst Haeckel in a tone and with implications never applied by her to any other human being. There can be little doubt that his also was a "mission," nor much doubt of its sponsorship. The fight between light and darkness that suspended unfinished with the Atlantean catastrophe, must now be decided once and for all in the Fifth Race, and the manner of its decision will determine the Egoic numbers remaining to the Sixth and Seventh Races. How shall it be won?

The curse of the age is that, with the human mind what it is, evil wins even when it seemingly loses, and sometimes most wins when it seems most to lose. The enemies of man care not in the least whether one nation or another win a war, whether men are massacred by "totalitarians" or cheated by "democrats," whether men hate each other in sodden despair or "righteous triumph," whether subjugated nations be trampled into the mud in the name of race hatred or be obliterated in the name of "justice." The concern of the dark forces is that as many of these things be done as possible, and such cooperation in this as cannot be obtained in one quarter can be had easily in another. The range of evil thought is not as short as the range of robot bombs, nor is it as young (by many thousands of years) as "Hitlerism."

The case of the Negro and of the loyal Japanese-American is not too much better in America than that of the Jew in Europe, and can grow into greater likeness with an ease and speed now incredible. Any Jew who joins the Gentile in holding his skirts aside from the Negro follows the path pointed by his Scripture, but to what end?

Is there not an irony in the fact that the section of this nation which once fought a savage war in defense of its "right" to hold human property, was the most belligerent of all against Germany?

Verily the mind is colored by that which is contemplated, and verily is hatred the mightiest fixer of contemplation. This evil, like a sable-winged phoenix, buoyed by the dark thoughts of men called "good," rises ever from the ashes of its seeming destruction. Let Theosophists give it no new nesting places in their minds and hearts, however subtle the persuasion to do so. Egos of ancient evil as well as of ancient good are reincarnating apace in this land. Those who are wise will attract no evil births by furnishing them the atmosphere of congenial thought.

AMONG YOUTH-COMPANIONS

"It is the Master's work to preserve the true philosophy, but the help of the companions is needed to re-discover and promulgate it."

AS she had promised, Gail stopped by for Alice a week or so after their conversation, and they went on together to the meeting. To Max, who was chairman, Gail said, "I'm sure we all know Alice by sight, at least, for she's been coming to Lodge meetings for several months. I've told her a little of the way we work, and now she's come to see for herself what it's like."

"We're glad to have you with us, Alice," said Max, "and we hope you'll come into the discussion whenever you feel like it. Our special subject tonight is Psychism, and we're going to take up some of its popular forms. That will be our 'Outer World Contact' period, when we look to see how Theosophical teachings help us to deal with some general problem before people's minds."

"You see," Martinez put in, "we don't believe in 'ivory-tower' philosophies. The real Theosophists are always practical, because they see what is really needed in the world, and devote themselves to supplying the need as directly as possible."

"Psychism," Max resumed, "and all that comes under that term, is a more important public issue than is usually supposed. From Madame Blavatsky's *Five Messages* it is plain enough, and evidence enough to pile up in support of her statements. What shall we begin with?"

"Let's begin with the ouija board," Alayne suggested. "I have a clipping here which states that between February and June of this year, one New York department store alone has sold more than 50,000 ouija boards to, it says, 'credulous and incredulous customers'."

"I'd like to know just what a ouija board is," Alice asked. "I've never seen one."

"I never have, either," replied Alayne, "but there's a description here:

> The ouija itself—the name is derived from the French "oui" and the German "ja," both meaning "yes"—is a flat board, the size of a breakfast tray. Across it are written the alphabet, the numbers from one to ten, and the words "yes" and "no." Two players face each other, the board resting upon their knees. Their fingertips are placed lightly on the edges of a small, heart-shaped piece of wood—the plan-

chette—mounted on three legs. When a question is asked, this cordate frame moves about the board, stopping at certain letters and numbers, spelling the words of the answer.

There is no real understanding—among most of the people who use the ouija board—of what makes it move, but this, instead of urging caution in connection with the practice, makes the 'pastime' all the more intriguing. Mr. Crosbie has explained, however, that it is just another form of automatic writing, which may be done without any medium or board, provided the person engages in a certain type of thinking. Then the same person sees with one set of organs and reports to another set, and the direction of the hand comes from a certain process in the astral brain."

"And," Gail added, "the 'messages' and communications usually express no greater knowledge or perception than that of the persons involved in manipulating the board. If people only realized that there is no knowledge to be gained from the practice, any more than there is knowledge to be obtained through mediums! Knowledge comes only through our own *efforts,* and passivity can never bring it to us—whether the passive means be playing the ouija board, going to séances, 'sitting for development,' or mere belief in the authority, and therefore the opinions, theories and dogmas, of someone else."

"That's certainly an important point," King commented. "Couldn't we say that psychism is, in one sense, passivity, and in that case isn't it easier to see how indulgence along these lines runs counter to the central task of man's spiritual and moral—as well as his physical—evolution? Our constant struggle, as human beings, is for *control* of our natures. Psychic practices are bound to defeat that purpose."

"Of course, the most serious passivity," Janice remarked, "is that provided for hypnosis. Some doctors now consider hypnosis to be of remarkable value as a simple method of anesthesia—there has been much written lately about 'babies by hypnosis,' for example, and surgeons contemplate hypnotizing their patients so they will not feel pain."

"Don't forget all the fascinating tales about wonderful personality developments due to hypnotic treatments," Dave added. "One 'maestro of minds' claims to relieve—and has relieved—according to one account, 'fixations, tobacco and drug addictions, timidity, fears, self-consciousness, nervousness, inferiority complex, stage fright, alcoholism, personality and speech defects, insomnia, and

melancholy.' There's no doubt about his general success, but that is not the point. The powers we all have are capable of greater feats than any mere hypnotist could even imagine, when they are exercised with knowledge and for purposes higher than commercial gain. Again, it's not the results the hypnotist *wants to get,* and gets, that are the especially dangerous part of the practice. It is the results he *doesn't know he's getting,* and gets, that Theosophy warns about. Once a person is hypnotized, he will for the rest of his life be particularly susceptible to the influence of the hypnotist's will, and sensitive to hypnotizers in general. But one suspects even that information would not unduly alarm the average person, who seems more or less resigned to living under somebody's domination anyhow."

"It is easy to see," Max said, "how crucial this question is, for the whole problem relates not only to the more obvious forms of psychic phenomena, but also to the larger areas of psychic influence. The question of belief, dogma or knowledge is charged with psychic currents which impel a man to substitute feelings and desires and wishes for thought, discrimination and understanding. Perhaps the old philosophical problems of fate versus free-will would have been solved long since if men were *actually concerned about exercizing their will* in daily life. If they habitually thought things out and then deliberately made their choices, instead of drifting carelessly into half-hearted decisions, they would soon enough find out whether life can be freely determined or not!"

"Take the whole question of authority, that Gail mentioned," Alayne contributed. "Think how much we accept into our minds on the *authority* of another person. Much of it may be true, or it may be false. But *we don't question,* and how can one act intelligently on the mere authority of another? Actually, whenever we have areas of unconsidered thought, we have the basis for those so-called 'irrational impulses' which are so expensive karmically and so regrettable rationally. What we have in our minds we will act upon, and if we don't know why we think what we do, we cannot know why we do what we do. When all's said and done, the familiar phenomenon of the impulsive action that acts itself without our approval is only removed by a matter of degrees from the tragic case of the mind that must watch powerlessly while its outer personality commits all manner of outrages—and *that* is the case of the insane man. On this point, I'd like to recommend Jane Hillyer's *Reluctantly Told,* which is an autobiographical account of the experience of insanity.

In it you'll find ample material for a study of lower manas, and a demonstration in reverse of what control of the mind means."

"That is very apropos of our subject," Martinez said, "because psychic tendencies, uncontrolled, lead directly to insanity, in long or short time. If a man invites outside influences by passive submission, he will end by atrophying his will, and finally lose control altogether over his psychic nature. When the connection between the spiritual and the psychic mind is broken, we say the person is insane. The real Ego is just as sane as ever, but he has lost touch with his personality, and cannot make it do his will."

"Do you mean," Alice asked, a little incredulously, "that playing with ouija boards can lead to insanity?"

"Not only can, but has done so in several cases I've heard about," Dave replied. "You see, little psychic pastimes, like the ouija board, are just about as 'harmless' as the microscopic germ that causes a serious disease. If the psychic germs enter a human system where the resistance is low, the development of a major psychic disease may follow in short order. And even a naturally positive and regulated nature can be infected in the course of time, if the individual persists in 'playing passive,' so to say."

"Generally speaking," said Max, "that is the first thing people ought to learn about psychic phenomena—that none of it is without definite, detrimental effect on the individual. The casual exhibitions of psychic powers are, perhaps, more dangerous, because more deceptive, than the more professional spiritualistic or mediumistic practices. Proverbs to the contrary notwithstanding, we still think the first step *doesn't* count, and so we go on taking one 'first step' after another, until all of a sudden we find ourselves at the end of the road, without knowing exactly how we got there, and—what is worse—without knowing how we can turn back. Insanity is the end of the road whose beginning may be any relinquishment of self-control. If we know something of the nature of this cycle and its dangers, we have a special responsibility to do all we can to turn the tide from psychic indulgence to rational action."

"This does interest me," Alice declared, "and I see I ought to be more fully informed. Have you anything I could read on these subjects?"

And so Alice took "Cycles of Psychism" home that night, promising to join the Companions again next time.

THE THEOSOPHIC PHILOSOPHY

II

IT is one thing to accuse philosophers of failing to solve the eternal questions of human life, of the priority and relationship of mind and matter, of the origin of evil, of the source and destiny of all things. This is just, and admitted by the philosophers themselves: "There are many questions—and among them those that are of the profoundest interest to our spiritual life—which so far as we can see, must remain insoluble to the human intellect unless its powers become of quite a different order from what they are now."[1] But the serene unconcern with which scientists and scientific writers include metaphysical principles of profound implication in expositions that are supposed to be utterly devoid of this insidious element is hardly justified by the admitted inadequacy of modern philosophy.

Metaphysics is, by definition, "the science of the fundamental causes and processes in things." Materialism, therefore, is the metaphysical doctrine that the universe is the result of the composition of forces which, although they operate according to immutable law, are blind and unintelligent. This theory, it has been suggested, was a reaction from the extreme theological belief that "There's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow," which resolved all fundamental causes into the inscrutable will of an omniscient personal God—the "asylum of ignorance," as Spinoza called it. Materialism, going to the other extreme, denies any sort of intelligence of purpose in the cosmic process and makes the implicit claim of knowledge as to what intelligence really is, and of the ultimate nature of law. After all, the postulate of "inscrutable" blind force is as useless and unmeaning an explanation of things as the inscrutable "will of God."

The idea of natural law, although not originating with Galileo and Newton, certainly gained acceptance through the works of these great pioneers of natural science. But they were far from being materialists, or even from supposing that they knew the nature of the principles they formulated. Galileo objected to the idea that gravity is the *cause* of the motion of the planets, pointing out that this term is merely a name for the observed effects. Newton, likewise, says:

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[1]Russell, Bertrand, *Problems of Philosophy* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., Home University Library), pp. 240-41.

> I have not yet been able to determine from the phenomena the cause of these properties of gravitation, and I do not invent hypotheses (*Hypothese non fingo*). It is sufficient that gravitation exists, that it acts according to laws we have formulated, and that it is capable of explaining all motions of heavenly bodies and of the sea.

Newton's conviction is made evident by numerous statements, in the *Scholium* attached to the end of the *Principia,* and in his letters to Bentley. In one of the latter he wrote:

> . . . the motions which the planets have, could not spring from any material cause alone, but were impressed by an intelligent agent. To make this system . . . required a cause which understood and compared together the quantities of matter in the several bodies of the suns and the planets and the gravitating powers resulting therefrom. . . . To compare and adjust all these things together . . . argues that cause to be not blind and fortuitous, but well skilled in mechanism and geometry.[2]

Again,

> "It is inconceivable that inanimate brute matter should, without the mediation of something else *which is not material,* operate upon and affect other matter, without mutual contact, as it must do if gravitation, in the sense of Epicurus, be essential and inherent in it. . . . That gravity should be innate, inherent and essential to matter, so that one body may act upon another at a distance, through a vacuum, without the mediation of anything else by and through which their action may be conveyed from one to another, is to me so great an absurdity that I believe no man, who has in philosophical matters a competent faculty of thinking, can ever fall into it. Gravity must be caused by an agent acting constantly according to certain laws; but *whether this agent* be *material or immaterial* I have left to the consideration of my readers.
>
> There arises no Variety in Things from blind metaphysical necessity, which is always and everywhere the same. All diversity in the Creatures could arise only from the Ideas and Will of a necessarily-existent Being.

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[2]H. P. Blavatsky wrote of Newton's ideas in *Isis Unveiled* (I, 177): "No one will presume to deny that his doctrine of universal space and attraction is purely a theory of magnetism. If his own words mean anything at all, they mean that he based all his speculations upon the 'soul of the world,' the great universal, magnetic agent, which he called the divine sensorium. ["Fundamental Principles of Natural Philosophy."] 'Here,' he says, 'the question is of a very subtile spirit which penetrates through all, even the hardest bodies, and which is concealed in their substance. Through the strength and activity of this spirit, bodies attract each other, and adhere together when brought into contact. Through it, electrical bodies operate at the remotest distance, as well as near at hand, attracting and repelling; through this spirit the light also flows, and is refracted and reflected, and warms bodies. All senses are excited by this spirit, and through it the animals move their limbs. But these things cannot be explained in few words, and we have not yet sufficient experience to determine fully the laws by which this universal spirit operates'."

In his scientific works Newton explicitly denied any intention of dealing with the real meanings and causes of natural phenomena. At the close of his *Opticks* he wrote, "I scruple not to propose the principles of motion . . ., they being of very general extent, and leave their Causes to be found out." The study of final causes, he felt, was not his province: "The main business of Natural philosophy is to argue from Phenomena without feigning Hypotheses, and to deduce Causes from Effects, till we come to the very First Cause which certainly is not mechanical!" (*Scholium.*)

To attribute to Newton the foundation of modern materialism, is, then, a calumniation of the memory of that great man. His own religious convictions, derived mainly from the Cambridge Platonists, together with his knowledge of the laws of nature, formed a far more consistent picture of the universe than the dogmas of modern materialism, yet he would not impose his religious beliefs on his readers. As expressed by Madame Blavatsky:

> . . . Newton, who of all men had best right to trust to his deductions and views, was nevertheless forced to abandon the idea of ever explaining, by the laws of *known* Nature and its Material forces, the original impulse given to the millions of orbs. He recognized fully the limits that separate the action of natural Forces from that of the INTELLIGENCES that set the immutable laws into order and action. And if a NEWTON had to renounce such hope, which of the modern materialistic pigmies has the right of saying: "I know better"?[4]

The Secret Doctrine was published in 1888. A recent writer on the subject of Gravitation shows that the physics of the present time has made little or no advance since Newton's day.

> Just because the effects of gravitation are so familiar and because Newton's law accounts so completely for the motions of the heavenly bodies, except for a few minute effects which Einstein's theory represents better than Newton's, we are apt to forget how mysterious gravitation is and how little our so-called explanations penetrate the mystery. . . . Our so-called explanations are almost always mere descriptions of one sort or another. . . .[5]

Turning from physics to the younger science of Biology, we find the same course of events—a refinement of description, but little or no explanation. Evolution is a fact, just as the birth and orderly movements of the solar system are facts. We have many descriptions of evolutionary process, but no explanation of *exactly how or why it works*. For a generation or more biologists have endeavored

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[4] *The Secret Doctrine*, I, 594.

[5] Lambert, Walter D., *Scientific Monthly*, May 1925 (XX, 479).

to explain heredity—the special problem of evolutionary theory, in accordance with the so-called "mechanistic assumption"—that "The business of the scientist is to explain everything by the physical causes which are comparatively well understood and to exclude the interference of spiritual causes."[6] The problem centers around the supposed units of transmissible characteristics, the "genes," which although they have never been seen (and are even denied existence by some geneticists[7]), serve to represent whatever *is* transmitted from parent to offspring. Unfortunately, the "gene mutations," which have been artificially induced in the laboratory are supposed, according to present theory, to be the source of new and advantageous developments among animal species, have been shown by statistical study to result overwhelmingly in harmful modifications of the organism.

The fact of the matter is that biologists are now beginning to realize that the metaphysical assumptions of materialism are as stultifying to biological research as the Aristotelian doctrine of essences and occult properties, or the theological providence, and that the phenomena of living organisms are inexplicable in terms of the reciprocal relationships of matter and blind force. Prof. Edwin G. Conklin of Princeton, one of America's leading biologists, writes:

> We know that all organisms are differentially sensitive, . . . In short, they are generally able to differentiate and select between that which is satisfactory and that which is not. No one can at present explain this property of life, but apparently it is a general characteristic of all living things. It characterizes the behavior of germ cells and embryos as well as adult organisms. It is the basis of that form of behavior known as "trial and error"; it is fundamental to all learning and is the beginning of intelligence and wisdom in man as well as in higher animals. . . .
>
> There is no mechanistic explanation of this property of life, but the same is true of many other properties of living things. Because we cannot at present explain mechanistically the properties of the organization of protoplasm and its capacities of assimilation, reproduction and sensitivity is no ground for denying that these properties exist, and the same is true of the property of organic adaptation. But given these properties, science can explain in a mechanistic, that is, in a causal manner, multitudes of structures and functions and reactions that have arisen in the course of evolution.
>
> It seems to me that recent theories of evolution have too often left out of account these fundamental properties of life. Assigning all evolution to externally caused mutations and to environmental se-

[6] *Encyclopedia Britannica* (14th ed.), "Materialism."
[7] See work of Richard Goldsmith.

> lection neglects the fact that the organism is itself a living, acting and reacting system. Life is not merely passive clay in the hands of environment, but is active in response to stimuli; it is not merely selected by the environment but is also itself ever selecting in its restless seeking for satisfaction.[8]

Had the attempts at mechanical interpretation of vital processes really led to a larger understanding of the problems of biology, there might be some justification for the "mechanistic assumption." But as Edmund Sinnott, a leading morphologist, has written, "The results of physiological research have tended to emphasize the complexity rather than the simplicity of protoplasm and have entirely failed as yet to solve the elusive problem of what an organism really is."[9]

It was supposed that the Mendelian principles of heredity, and later, the formulation of the theory of genes, would lead to fundamental knowledge, but as Prof. Sinnott points out, "geneticists are coming to realize that their really basic problem is not the location and transmission of genes but the mechanism by which these control the development of an organism, a question about which our ignorance is almost complete." Such statements could be multiplied indefinitely, as everyone familiar with contemporary scientific literature knows. The position of biological science today may be summed up in the statement of Prof. Ralph S. Lillie of the University of Chicago: "there are certain 'vital factors' which control and direct the integration of organisms that cannot be identified completely with purely physical factors."

This was precisely the criticism of scientific method made by H. P. Blavatsky in 1888, in *The Secret Doctrine*. The various forces observed by science, are, she said, "but the tools and final means for the accomplishment of certain purposes, acting periodically, and apparently mechanically, through an inward impulse mixed up with but beyond their material nature." The "vital factors" spoken of by Prof. Lillie are the spiritual Forces which, in H.P.B.'s words, "having been usually confused with the purely physical, the former are denied by, and therefore, have to remain unknown to Science, because left unexamined."

The metaphysical teaching of Theosophy integrates both biological and physical phenomena in a system of thought which is consistent with the facts of all the sciences, satisfying the severest re-

[8] *Science*, Aug. 17, 1934.

[9] *Science*, Jan. 15, 1937.

quirements of the logician, and which at once gains the intuitive approval of the religious or devotional aspect of man's nature. It says:

> Occultism does not deny the certainty of the mechanical origin of the Universe; it only claims the absolute necessity of mechanisms of some sort. . . . It is a fundamental principle of the Occult philosophy, this same homogeneity of matter and immutability of natural laws, which are so much insisted upon by materialism; but that unity rests upon the inseparability of Spirit from matter, and, if the two are once divorced, the whole Kosmos would fall back into chaos and non-being.
>
> No more than Science, does esoteric philosophy admit *design* or "special creation." It rejects every claim to the "miraculous," and accepts nothing outside the uniform and immutable laws of Nature. But it teaches a cyclic law, a double stream of force (or spirit) and of matter, which, starting from the *neutral centre* of Being, develops in its cyclic progress and incessant transformations. . . . The whole order of nature evinces a progressive march towards *a higher life*. There is design in the action of the seemingly blindest forces. The whole process of evolution with its endless adaptations is a proof of this. The immutable laws that weed out the weak and feeble species, to make room for the strong, and which ensure the "survival of the fittest," though so cruel in their immediate action—all are working toward the grand end. The very *fact* that adaptations *do* occur, that the fittest *do* survive in the struggle for existence, shows that what is called "unconscious Nature" is in reality an aggregate of forces manipulated by semi-intelligent beings (Elementals) guided by High Planetary Spirits . . . whose collective aggregate . . . constitutes at one and the same time the MIND of the Universe and its immutable LAW.
>
> This is, again, no "special creation," nor is there any "Design," except in the general "ground-plan" worked out by the universal law. But there are certainly "designers," though these are neither omnipotent nor omniscient in the absolute sense of the term.
>
> It is to avoid such anthropomorphic conceptions that the Initiates never use the epithet "God" to designate the One and Secondless Principle in the Universe; and that—faithful in this to the oldest traditions of the Secret Doctrine the world over—they deny that such imperfect and often not very clean work could ever be produced by Absolute Perfection. There is no need to mention here other still greater metaphysical difficulties. Between speculative Atheism and idiotic anthropomorphism there must be a philosophical mean, and a reconciliation. The Presence of the Unseen Principle throughout all nature, and the highest manifestation of it on Earth—MAN, can alone help to solve the Problem, which is that of the mathematician whose x must ever elude the grasp of our terrestrial algebra.

FRIENDS OF TRUTH

EVER since the founding of the present Theosophical Movement, certain types of minds have periodically brought up the question of what they call the apparent conflict between Theosophy and Science. "Why," they say, "does not a noble philosophy like Theosophy ally itself with Science, so as to attract to the Movement the best and keenest minds of the day? Why not set aside this awful reverence shown for ancient philosophers and be progressive, in keeping with the spirit of modern times?"

These questions have been answered over and over again and the relation between Theosophy and Science plainly shown, yet the queries persist. And the reason for it lies perhaps in the fact that such questioners are not clear in their own minds as to what they mean by these terms. Do we mean by Theosophy some new-born religious creed, dogmatically laid down on the basis of unproved revelations? Do we mean by Science the currently popular theories of speculative investigators, which are no sooner formulated than they become passé? If we do, then "Theosophy" and "Science" can never be made to agree, however earnestly we may try.

But neither Theosophy nor Science are things that can be marked off and enclosed within the narrow framework of theory or belief. However dissimilar they may appear, the two are the same in spirit, for both represent research, inquiry, open-mindedness, growth. This common bond of endeavor was declared by H. P. Blavatsky when she said: "We are not the friends of theory, but of truth, and until truth is found, we welcome every new theory, however unpopular at first, for fear of rejecting in our ignorance the stone which may in time become the very corner-stone of the truth."

Yet where is such open-minded enquiry to be found? Where is the man so devoted to Truth that he is willing to cast aside every theory or belief that is found to contravene fact, while he rejects no theory until its fallacy is proved? Many think they are searchers for Truth, when in reality their minds are as fixed as barnacles on a ship. The story is told of an orthodox archæologist who, in the course of his excavations, came upon a very *un-orthodox* form of human skeleton. Envisioning precious theories and the result of years of labor destroyed, he angrily thrust the evidence back into earth, and cried: "It's a lie—it simply cannot be!" Whether the story is true or not, it symbolizes that too common characteristic of the human mind which bars the road to progress.

How many religious and philosophical seekers have done the same thing! How many professed students of life have walked out of lecture halls disgusted, have literally re-buried unearthed treasures simply because those treasures did not coincide with what they thought truth should be? How many scientific investigators have suppressed invaluable facts, because those facts did not support their personal hobbies and hypotheses? Such men are not seekers after truth, whatever else they may be. They are only seeking confirmation of their own preconceived ideas and notions, and would not accept truth if it were offered them on a silver platter.

Thus it is that the friends of truth are few indeed.

Few are those in our age who can disencumber themselves of their personal beliefs and hobbies, whose spiritual consciousness is untrammeled by the shackles of narrow opinions, and whose inherent power of discrimination is free to judge on the impersonal basis of truth alone. For the most part we live in fear of the mighty onrush of fact, lest the surging tide of discovery should sweep us and our beloved beliefs into oblivion. As though the Truth that is not of this earth could ever be injured by earthly findings! Truth and fact are not separate antagonistic entities. They are two aspects of one and the same thing, and will always be found to complement each other. Why, then, should friends of truth fear the results of research? Why despise facts, or any kind of evidence that is proved on logical grounds to be sound and true? The open-minded spirit of investigation, and the facts disclosed, will lead in time to the treasured possession of Truth complete. The method employed by Madame Blavatsky in presenting Theosophy to the world was to marshall before our gaze all the known facts of science, every one of which without exception was shown to support the doctrines of Esoteric Philosophy.

Theosophy, therefore, has no argument with Science nor with the facts of Science. Theosophy is not even opposed to the most fanciful and absurd theories, so long as these are put forth *as theories,* or as *possible* explanations of facts perceived. What it does reject, as vigorously as it denounces religious dogmatism, is that brand of modern speculation, so-called Science, which blazons forth its theories as gospel truth and expects all men to believe them. Unfortunately for the world, it is this latter form of Science which is known and accepted by the minds of men today, and which our kind but unthinking critics would attach as a heavy drag upon the ever-onward march of scientific Theosophy.

INVESTIGATING PSYCHIC POWERS

IN regard to the third object of the T. S., what, if anything, is being done in the way of investigating the "psychic powers latent in man"?

W.Q.J.—There are two ways to understand the word "investigate." Either it means an actual physical experimental investigation, or another sort, the other being investigation of the philosophy and the laws underlying the phenomena. The former has not been done by the T. S. for the reason that the philosophy as given out by writers like H.P.B. indicates a danger to the experimenter; and experience sustains the views promulgated by her and those who follow her lead. It is said that a profitable investigation of the psychic realm is only possible when we have first the instruments and next the character—in the line of purity and virtue—without which no right investigation in a practical way is possible. There are no mechanical tools or instruments that are of use; the realm is full of delusion and darkness; mediums, seers, and psychics are all alike (until we get those who really know) unaware of the source of the phenomena or the meaning of them when they come; they give different explanations for the same thing, and they contradict each other as often as not. Unsensitive experimenters, equally with the seers and psychics, are ignorant of the realm they deal with in almost all cases, and in many they deny obvious explanations known to be true by those who have studied the philosophy. And as far as the T. S. is concerned, it has not from the beginning paid attention to this so-called practical investigation.

The phenomena of H.P.B.'s production were her own and not the Society's, and no one has since been like her. Evidently she had, as she said, a distinct purpose and reason for the doing of her phenomena. It was to draw attention to and to leave a record of a different sort from the long and sad one of mediumship. Experience in that has amply sustained her views. We know that the medium's record is sad and full of instances going to prove the grave dangers incurred by those who attempt to deal before they are inwardly ready with forces belonging to other planes of being. All through the ages the wise have said that the mere wish of the practical man of the day for phenomena and for the production of them is not a good reason for complying with the request. H.P.B., a later teacher, said that the moral and ethical philosophical ground must be fully

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NOTE.—This question and answer was first printed by William Q. Judge in *The Theosophical Forum*, August, 1894.

and precedently prepared for the new growth that is to come in the line of psychic powers, for if they are permitted to develop in such a selfish and sordid soil as is now afforded in our civilization they will come to be a menace and terror in place of being a blessing. This is why I for one would be sorry to see any of the T. S. Branches engage in such practical investigation.

But of the other sort of investigation we have had and still have a good deal. Our philosophy explains the facts already at hand, and shows distinctly how the virtues and excellences of character must be developed and realized before we are at all ready for practically touching the psychic forces. At the same time, by giving a sufficient analysis of man's composite nature it tends to prevent and do away with all superstition in respect to the many psychic phenomena that daily have place. This latter method of investigation is the right one in my opinion, and the one to be retained rather than the other.

THE POET AS SCIENTIST

Poets are always years, if not centuries, ahead of scientists. They see and understand what goes on; the scientist labors along in the rear, trying to explain why it goes on. Of course the beginning of all science is objective description, and many poets were good, simple scientists of the old naturalist type. But it is a long step from the observation of an item of human behavior, with some intuitive insight into the implications, to the scientific explanation of the anatomy, physiology, and psychology behind the behavior. Scientific bits are laboriously discovered over the years until at last a partly fitted mosaic gives a clue to the nature of the whole picture. The poet sees the essentials in a flash and puts them into a form that makes others feel their truth and importance. If the observation is not a true one, the poet's admirers soon leave him, or only a few crackpots remain. It is when he "strikes to the heart of things" and says so in some universal symbolism that the poet lives.

—STANLEY COBB

ON THE LOOKOUT

Education and Reaction

For the past fifteen years, President Robert M. Hutchins of the University of Chicago has been trying to clarify the purposes of institutions of "higher learning." His opponents have classed him as a scholastic who wishes to return to an outmoded emphasis upon metaphysics. He has encouraged traditions of the past, however, only in so far as they are capable of holding before the rising generation the "habitual vision of greatness." He is concerned primarily with moral values, values transcendent of time and of particular environment. (Lookout, June, 1944.) The first freedom, to paraphrase Hutchins, is freedom of the mind. Without this, no other freedoms can endure, and freedom of the mind is qualified in each individual by the area and depth which his mind can embrace. Philosophical understanding is more important than the acquirements of technical aptitudes. Progressive education cannot progress without a consideration of moral principle.

Where Hutchins Stands

President Hutchins speaks of "education for freedom." He means stimulation of that type of fundamental thinking about the essentials of life, the ends of man and his relationship to his fellows which enables the individual to evaluate the meaning of such words as truth, goodness, duty, freedom. If we can do this we may grow up to a state of mental maturity and be able also to understand, for instance, democracy and fascism. Hutchins believes that the only education actually relevant to the encouragement of a free society is that which induces men to consider the substance of those principles which are commonly invoked to justify an accepted way of life. An avowed opponent of materialism, and of the doctrine that the good life is simply a more abundant life rather than the moral life, Hutchins has succeeded throughout the years in making his position sufficiently clear.

Action vs. Comfortable Inertia

It seems to be an academic tradition, however, that on any such matter the printed advocacy or defense of one's thesis is all that it is proper for a good intellectual to indulge in. When Hutchins stated, as he has often stated, that "nothing less than a moral, intellectual and spiritual revolution can save mankind," and that the

University must here learn to play an inspired role, these seemed to be admirable sentiments. They were echoed and approved by the majority of the Faculty at Chicago.

But when the good Hutchins had the temerity to suggest far-reaching revisions in antiquated educational policies, in the interests of producing a more socially responsible faculty, the alarm bells were rung. On Jan. 12, he stealthily approached reactionary faculty members from the flank at the Trustee Faculty Dinner and proposed that the University show a willingness to begin the revolution which it theoretically supported:

> We are still entangled in the farce of academic rank. It performs no function except to guarantee a certain constant measure of division and disappointment in the faculty. . . . Rank means nothing except trouble. We should get rid of it.

Socialism Now

> As academic rank divides the academic community, so does our tendency to regard that professor as most successful who has the greatest number of paying interests outside the University. The members of the faculty should be put on a full-time basis; they should be paid decent salaries; and they should be free to engage in any outside activities they like. To make sure that the ones they like are the ones that are good for them, they should be required to turn over all their outside earnings to the University.
>
> We should promote the sense of community within the University by reconsidering the whole salary question. The only basis of compensation in a true community is need. The academic community should carefully select its members. When a man has been admitted to it, he should be paid enough to live as a professor should live. This would mean that a young man with three children would have a larger living allowance than a departmental chairman with none. Under the present system the members of the faculty who get any money get it when they need it least and starve and cripple themselves and their scholarly development because they get nothing to live on when they need it most.

The Battle Begins

Reactionaries, including many intellectual proponents of the University's responsibility in social pioneering, were not long in assembling their protest. The newspapers reported a growing and dangerous rift between President and Faculty, and told of the "revolt of a rebellious bloc of more than 100 full professors at the University of Chicago."

> In particular, faculty members inquired concerning the meaning of a statement attributed to Dr. Hutchins that "the purpose of the university is nothing less than to procure a moral, intellectual and spiritual revolution throughout the world."

A memorial was drawn up by the University Senate, addressing the grievances of the Faculty to the Board of Trustees, and asking by implication for a vote of no confidence for Hutchins' proposals. The Board of Trustees, apparently knowing a good man as well as a daring one when they see him, asserted their trust in the present leadership of the University and refuted charges implying Hutchins' "dictatorship" in personally suggesting such drastic revisions.

Hutchins vs. Conventional Opinion

Some seven months after Dr. Hutchins' original utterance at the Trustee Faculty Dinner, he spoke at the opening of the Summer Session, and answered varied charges in a lucid statement entitled the "Organization and Purpose of the University."

> I have lately heard [he said] that I am seeking to impose a particular philosophy on the University. This is in a sense a highly complimentary suggestion, because it implies that I have a philosophy. I suppose everybody has a philosophy, in a way. We are all metaphysicians, whether we know it or not, and whether we like it or not. For we all act all the time on certain basic assumptions in regard to the nature of the world and of man.
>
> The statement that the purpose of the University is to procure a moral, intellectual, and spiritual revolution throughout the world, could conceivably be taken to mean that I had a particular philosophy. It does not remotely suggest that I am about to impose it. . . .
>
> Is the call for a moral, intellectual, and spiritual revolution throughout the world the statement of a particular doctrine? I should call it the statement of a very general doctrine indeed. . . . This general doctrine should, moreover, be very popular in a university, for men who regard wealth and power as the aim of life seldom select a university as the field for their ambition.
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> Absolute freedom the University still enjoys. The question is whether, as it has lost its youth, it will lose its daring and its unity, the daring which is the willingness to follow the facts to the bitter end and act in accordance with them no matter how disquieting the conclusion may be; the unity which is the product of a common purpose. Without a common purpose no form of organization can bring unity, for to organize to bring people together who have different ends is to bring them into collision, not into harmony. Without daring and unity freedom itself is vain, for freedom, too, is

nothing but a means to an end, and academic freedom is no exception. We want freedom, academic or otherwise, in order to achieve our purpose. Freedom is empty unless we have a purpose beyond the purpose to be free.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

We are going to have a new world whether we like it or not. The signs of the character of that world which we can now make out are not encouraging. To me it seems that nothing less than a moral, intellectual, and spiritual revolution can save mankind, for the scale of values by which we live has given us at last means which can be used to exterminate the human race without giving us the will, the reason, or the vision to see the human ends for which these means should be used or to discover the methods by which these means can be directed to these ends.

In the moral, intellectual, and spiritual conflict which I foresee the University may take whichever side it pleases. It may endorse the scale of values by which our society lives; or it may join in the effort to reverse them. The only thing it cannot do, as it seems to me, is to stand apart from the conflict on the theory that its function places it above it. This is to doom the University to sterility. It is to renounce the task of intellectual leadership. It is to deny at a great crisis in history our responsibility to mankind.

THE FEARS OF A PRAGMATIST

The August issue of *Fortune* carries a lengthy critique by John Dewey of Hutchins' point of view. Dewey's article will be reviewed in more detail in Lookout next month, but one point may be considered here. He says:

We are familiar with [Mr. Hutchins' view] from early childhood. It is a conventionally established part of a large portion of our training in family and Sunday school. Nevertheless, it is the expression of a provincial and conventional point of view, of a culture that is pre-scientific in the sense that science bears today. . . . What exists in social philosophy at the present time is largely an abstract disputation between something called "individualism" and something called "socialism." But the problem is a concrete one. How shall this and that definite factory and field operation be made to contribute to the educative release and growth of human capacities, as well as to production of a large and reasonably cheap supply of material goods? The problem is one that, by its own terms, can be dealt with only by the continuous application of the scientific method of experimental observation and test. Those who feel in need of a specific example of the connection between science and morals, between "natural" facts and human values, will find it here.

A Practical Revolutionary

With all due respect to the sincerity of the venerable pragmatist and recognizing his right to speak for the majority of modern educators, it appears from the foregoing account of the University of Chicago battle that "Scholastic" Hutchins fulfills all of Dewey's own requirements, and also possesses an additional depth of philosophical understanding. Hutchins is a man with the courage which a practical revolutionary requires, and he is ever the first to protest a divorce of the theoretical from practical political and social realities. Hutchins, it would seem, is a practical theosophist, in the sense that (1) he believes first in the disciplined struggle necessary for clarification of the Fundamentals of philosophy, (2) he constantly strives to look beyond the prejudices of the day toward the Eternal Verities, and (3) he sees and also exemplifies the doctrine that no one truly believes in a principle unless he is eager and willing to *make it live* in every opportunity for application.

Catastrophic Preludes

On Sept. 5, a "very severe" earthquake shook the Atlantic coast from eastern Canada to as far south as Virginia, and inland to the border of Ohio. No lives were lost, and property damage was slight except for the region in and around Malone, N. Y., which was the center of the quake. The newspapers minimized the importance of the occurrence. As the New York *Times* put it, "Geophysicists were interested but not alarmed." A Fordham seismologist gave his opinion that the quake was the city's first and maybe its last, although, one commentator cautioned, the idea that the Eastern Seaboard is exempt from earthquakes is after all only a theory.

Two weeks after the earthquake, Atlantic Coast Americans "were treated to an unusually messy hurricane. For the second time in six years, a tropical cyclone hit the Eastern seaboard with full force." *Time* (Sept. 25.) reported:

> September is the hurricane season, and each season produces an average of three. Usually, after traveling northwest toward Florida, hurricanes hit a high-pressure coastal front and veer seaward toward a low-pressure area south of Greenland. But last week's storm, like that in 1938, was funneled inland by the coincidence of a low-pressure front near the Great Lakes.

Is the Atlantic seaboard as settled and shock-free as some authorities would have us believe, and will it always be true that "the

Eastern States stand in no danger of wholesale destruction," as one editorial soothingly affirmed? How many more meterological "coincidences" will occur before a pattern emerges and is recognized?

"QUEER WEATHER AHEAD"

Last March, Dr. Charles Abbot, secretary of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, and an "authority on the sun," predicted that a cycle of eccentric weather is about to repeat itself. Dr. Abbot (see THEOSOPHY XXIV, 91) expects that during 1945 and 1946 the power of the sun's rays will diminish just as it did during a queer spell 22 years ago, 1921-23. According to the *Newsweek* account (March 6):

> Beginning this autumn, the slump in sun radiation will amount to as much as 1½ per cent. (Solar depression does not necessarily mean lower or higher temperature, but a complexity of worldwide atmospheric circulation causing freakish weather.) That small change can produce large effects on the weather.
>
> Dr. Abbot has spent 40 years studying the sun. He works out weather predictions by comparing sun-ray variations with Weather Bureau records and computing averages over the twenty-year cycle in which sun variations occur. He has found, for example, that ray changes of as little as one-half to three-quarters of 1 per cent can cause temperature changes of 10 to 15 degrees in the District of Columbia. When radiation increases over a period of two or three days, definite temperature changes follow as many as seventeen days later.

A CLIMATE CHANGE?

John J. O'Neill, science editor of the New York *Herald-Tribune*, collects weather records which point to a long-range change in climate, and which, he believes, "may be the transition to a new type of climate for the whole Northern Hemisphere and perhaps the entire earth":

> The weather maps reveal a change which may be of tremendous importance in so far as it may be an indication that the North Pole ice cap is in process of moving to some other part of the earth.
>
> The atmospheric mechanism which has produced the ice barrens of Greenland and the Arctic regions recently has disappeared from the weather map. The chief indicator of the ice-making process was the extensive permanent high-pressure area centered over Greenland, with smaller satellite areas north of Alaska and of the Siberian region. . . .

A More Rapid Transition

> Another, smaller permanent high-pressure area lying athwart the Atlantic Ocean in the latitude of the Bahama Islands has increased its pressure and greatly enlarged its area . . . and with increased strength from a mysteriously-obtained increase in pressure it has extended itself from the Florida, Georgia and South Carolina region . . . across the ocean in a somewhat broader than usual band through northern Africa and the Mediterranean Sea and as far as Persia. This region may contain the site of the next ice cap of the earth. (*Herald-Tribune,* Aug. 27.)

"There are indications," O'Neill writes, "that this process of change may have been going on for many years without being detected and that this year's unusual weather results from the fact that a critical point in the process has been reached, after which a more rapid transition may ensue."

The Sidereal Cycle

Madame Blavatsky wrote in 1888 that "in the terrible earthquakes and eruptions of these late years, and especially of the present one," was to be seen the commencement of a general volcanic conflagration for our Fifth Race, which will finally accomplish the destruction of the present (Fifth) Continent. Each Root-Race is put to an end by a Cataclysm, and therefore the subsidence and elevation of continents, "always in progress," is part of a great cyclic, evolutionary pattern:

> As land needs rest and renovation, new forces, and a change for its soil, so does water. Thence arises a periodical redistribution of land and water, change of climates, etc., all brought on by geological revolution, and ending in a final change in the axis.

"The weal and woe of nations is intimately connected with the beginning and close of the sidereal cycle," the *Secret Doctrine* (II, 330-1) states, and astronomical calculation gives "humanity in general, and our civilized races in *particular*, a reprieve of about 16,000 years" before the end of the present Sidereal year.

(Earlier discussions of earthquakes will be found in Theosophy XIX, 191, 213 and 325; XX, 208; XXI, 220; XXII, 12, 259 and 358; XXV, 115; XXVI, 494; XXIX, 116; and XXXII, 40. See also Mr. Judge's article, "Direful Prophecies," reprinted in Theosophy, August, 1940.)

THE RAZOR'S EDGE

A "best seller" among American fiction readers, *The Razor's Edge,* by Somerset Maugham, is mistaken in some quarters for a treatise on Hindu philosophy, reincarnation, Yoga, and—Theosophy! The "Hindu philosophy" provides the flavor of profundity, but the author has somewhere acquired the habit—disturbing to theosophists—of indiscriminate use of such terms as *Samadhi,* the Absolute and "meditation." Reincarnation is briefly explained, and illustrated by the report of a psychic vision from which the visioner surmised that he had incarnated four times in the past three or four hundred years. Yoga is discussed, Maugham's chief character relating that he casually discovered, while in India, that he could relieve people of pain and fear: "There's nothing to it, really; it only means putting the idea into the sufferer's mind." (Nothing to *that,* really, only a slight case of Black Magic.) Asked if he was taught that by the Yogi he met, the man answers:

> "Oh, no, he had no patience with that kind of thing. I don't know whether he believed that he possessed the powers that some Yogis claim to have, but he would have thought it puerile to exercise them."

Of course, only the most superficially-informed could equate such half-truths with Theosophy, but an excess of verisimilitude makes the book gravely misleading.

"IMPOSSIBLE TO BELIEVE"

Maugham's title is from a line in the *Katha-Upanishad*: "The sharp edge of a razor is difficult to pass over; thus the wise say the path to Salvation is hard." But the "razor's edge" Maugham himself finds it difficult to pass over is that which divides literary realism-for-its-own-sake from that clean, "surgical" realism which is one aspect of the "moral mirror" true literature holds up to mankind. The sources of the casual amorality which pervades this latest book may be discovered in his autobiography, *The Summing Up,* published six years ago. To a great extent, indeed, *The Razor's Edge* is a fictionalized reproduction of the author's own experiences with philosophy, as told in the story of his life. From the autobiography we learn that Maugham found only one explanation of the problem of evil "that appealed equally to my sensibility and to my imagination. This is the doctrine of the transmigration of souls":

> It would be less difficult [he writes] to bear the evils of one's own life if one could think that they were but the necessary outcome of one's errors in a previous existence, and the effort to do better would

> be less difficult too when there was the hope that in another existence a greater happiness would reward one. But if one feels one's own woes in a more forcible way than those of others (I cannot feel your toothache, as the philosophers say) it is the woes of others that arouse one's indignation. It is possible to achieve resignation in regard to one's own, but only philosophers obsessed with the perfection of the Absolute can look upon those of others, which seem so often unmerited, with an equal mind. If Karma were true one could look upon them with pity, but with fortitude. Revulsion would be out of place and life would be robbed of the meaninglessness of pain which is pessimism's unanswered argument. I can only regret that I find the doctrine . . . impossible to believe. . . .

So, Maugham concludes, "There is no explanation for evil. It must be looked upon as a necessary part of the order of the universe. To ignore it is childish; to bewail it senseless. Spinoza called pity womanish; the epithet has a harsh sound on the lips of that tender and austere spirit. I suppose he thought that it was but a waste of emotion to feel strongly about what one could not alter."

A Novelist's Preference

Such an amazing reversal of the familiar attitude toward Karma and Reincarnation—usually Reincarnation is "impossible to believe" —requires some attention. Though appearing at first sight to be counter to common sense, Maugham's position is not impossible to understand when some of his other ideas are considered. Thus, the man who confides, "It must be a fault in me that I am not gravely shocked at the sins of others unless they personally affect me, and even when they do I have learnt at last generally to excuse them," can hardly be expected to appreciate the "moral law of compensation." Maugham describes his exultation at discovering the rigid materialism of the scientific world of his youth: "because its conceptions coincided with my own prepossessions I embraced them with alacrity." He learned "that men were moved by a savage egoism," and he decided that "whatever aims men set themselves, they were deluded, for it was impossible for them to aim at anything but their own selfish pleasures." Nowhere in the remainder of his autobiography does Maugham indicate any evolution from this view of life and morality, and his latest book, in which he himself is the interlocutor, remains undistinguished as an exercise of moral judgment.

This is the more regrettable, because *The Razor's Edge* has for its chief character a "living American" (whose identity Maugham

refuses to divulge), with a way of life and a "peculiar strength and sweetness of character" that is expected to have—

> an ever-growing influence over his fellow men so that, long after his death perhaps, it may be realized that there lived in this age a very remarkable creature. Then it will be quite clear of whom I write in this book, and those who want to know at least a little about his early life may find in it something to their purpose.

METAPHYSICAL MEDLEY

With the best intentions in the world, apparently, Maugham has proved that it takes a wise man to tell a wise man—and to tell about him. In an aside in his autobiography, Maugham said, "you can be a very good novelist without being very intelligent," and in the present novel he seems to be bent on proving that you can be a very good moralist without being very much concerned with morality. His success with both formulas is negligible.

Maugham may find that belief in Reincarnation suits his temperament and profession, he may reject Karma as incredible, and accept the materialistic doctrine that morality is a man-made delusion —but it is obviously not advisable for one of such persuasions to attempt exposition of a character in which selflessness and integrity are innate. Nor is it probable that even the general principles of Hindu metaphysics will be properly perceived, much less adequately rendered, by one whose avowed opinion, after the study of various philosophies and religions, is that "In religion above all things the only thing of use is an *objective truth.*" (Italics ours.) It is no wonder that *The Razor's Edge* is an irresponsible handling of true and false information, a metaphysical medley, but it nevertheless represents unfortunate *karma* for Western readers, most of whom lack any real comprehension of psychic powers, false asceticism, and Hindu philosophy. The general reader would better be without any more Hinduistic hodgepodges than are already taking advantage of Western immaturity along these lines.

William Q. Judge warns against the development of psychic powers, apart from their philosophical basis and context, in the "selfish and sordid soil" of our civilization. And Madame Blavatsky, in her first Message to the American Theosophists, assigned as the purpose of their work not "to pander to psychic cravings" which are only "another form of materialism," but to "guide the spiritual awakening" then beginning. Present-day theosophists have this purpose still to accomplish.

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